

Artifacts of Our [ti]¹ Facts

Recent reports of stolen artifacts on Guam have been covered by local radio talk shows and newspaper reports. A photographer tipped Rlene Steffy, the host of “Rlene Live,” K-57 Radio, to express his outrage when he discovered *lusong*² had been removed from a historic site he frequently visited for photography purposes. Thieves removed two stones that were well publicized when it was photographed for the 1996 Guam telephone directory.

In order to remove these artifacts, a vehicle equipped with specialized apparatus would have to have been used to transport it out of a valley that has been described as remote. Contrary to reports, the site is easily accessible during the dry season, by vehicles with four wheel drive. Removing the artifacts was a very ambitious venture. Thieves intended to steal two *lusong*, and part of a *latte*,³ however, the *latte* was left at the site after it cracked while being pried out of the earth. Desired for landscaping, one of the stolen artifacts now sits in the front yard of a private home.

For weeks, the public debate between private ownership rights and respect for traditional cultural values continued in the airwaves, revealing more than just ambiguities in Guam’s laws. The occasion also served to legitimize the survival

of traditional cultural values and beliefs associated with Guam’s natural landscapes. Documenting traditional values and beliefs, through the experiences of the *manamko*,⁴ could enhance our understanding of how these artifacts have managed to exist in Guam’s landscape, perhaps even predating the arrival of European voyagers. If these artifacts have always existed in Guam’s landscape, prior to Guam’s first historic preservation plan, what traditional Chamorro value(s), if any, might still serve to protect artifacts from thievery and destruction today?

Assisted by family elders, shortcomings of Guam’s current program became obvious. According to Charo-Bobi (pronounced Tsa-row-boe-bee), the family *techa*,⁵

Juss bicuss you buy the lann, dussin min you own those [latte stones] thingks. You tell those peepull to leaf them [the artifacts] alone bicuss they are diss-turbing thingks that dont bilong to them. Ee-fen doctors understand the beleaf of the taotaomona⁶, thass why peepull come see me. Hwen efreeting is finiss, they [the sick or disturbed] will not talk about what they dit bicuss its dis-wrist-speck-full.⁷

As a child, my father⁸ learned that places filled with *latte* stones are to be avoided because of their association with *taotaomo’na*. Why anyone would bring a grave marker to their home was incomprehensible to him. Then my father just had to ask,

Bebee, Hwen dit these things become our-tifacts?⁹

These sentiments resounded into imagery that was not easily distanced. The experience recalled critiques of colonial discourse and post-colonialism.¹⁰ Developing strategies to address theft and vandalism of historic sites was further complicated on the eve of the golden anniversary of the signing of the Organic Act of Guam.¹¹ It was apparent that Guam’s traditional sense of place¹² was being displaced by the western methods of preservation. While envisioning all the various ways Guam’s current program conveys¹³ historic significance, traditional sense of place was nowhere to be found.

Latte stones and lusong historic sites are showing up in residential landscaping. Photo by the author.





Various stones lining a private driveway. Photo by the author.

The issue of theft and vandalism of historic sites on Guam, provides the opportunity to seriously consider whether Guam's current program design could still allow for the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems and values. Being of the position that they have always existed, the merits of this claim, if viewed through the current program, would ostensibly be challenged as having little to no impact in improving today's preservation practices and policies addressing theft and vandalism of historic sites.

The first concern would be how to validate the existence of traditional value systems and beliefs. An inter-disciplinary study could be designed to accomplish this. The outcome of this study may again be argued as being outside of Guam's current program needs, citing the lack of adequate personnel and budgetary constraints. Again, being of the position that traditional value systems and beliefs associated with *latte* stones and *lusong* have always existed, the merits of this claim, if viewed through the current program, would ostensibly be challenged, for a few reasons already mentioned. However, the greatest challenge to overcome yet would be the endless rhetoric of Guam's rapid urbanization as proof of the non-existence of traditional values, beliefs and traditions.

During a 1997 symposium entitled, *Preservation of What, For Whom?: A Critical Look at Historic Significance*, David L. Ames, Chairman for the National Council for Preservation Education, recognized the need to examine the field of historic preservation today:

... the field has matured significantly since the late 1960s. Looking ahead, we must ask whether the programs, policies, standards, guidelines, and processes that currently govern historic preservation are still appropriate

and relevant as they should be... Finally, how can the answers to these questions become incorporated into a field that cuts across academic disciplines, professional practice, and a number of public policies.¹⁴

Like the nation, Guam has had 25 years to reflect on the results of earlier preservation initiatives. Guam's program has changed considerably since 1976 and although many improvements have since been made, the program may not be as effective as professionals in the field would like to think. Unlike Guam, the Republic of Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia, through the Micronesian Endowment for Historic Preservation, have been allowed and encouraged to participate in the design of their preservation program model(s) to meet the respective values and beliefs of their peoples.

In Micronesia, historic preservation involves more than historic places; it includes oral history and oral literature, art forms, music, dance, ceremonies, and perhaps most important, traditional values and beliefs. Historic places are important to Micronesian people largely because they are physical links to traditional beliefs, traditional forms of social and political integration, and traditional moral values. Values and traditions are as important as historic places, and are cherished whether they have a physical, real property referent or not.¹⁵

Returning to my father's question,

*Bebee. Hwen dit these things become our-ti-facts? These things should be treated like turtles and fanibi (fruit bats). No buddy should own them. There should all-sue be stiff pennol-tees for those ack-sep-ting eni kind of our-ti-fact. Juss cole it ack-sep-ting stolen prop-pa-tee. Your office needs to come down hard! Im tellin you right now. Its juss like the poe-tsing deer. If caught, you con-fi-skett the truck, the guns and the carcass. You bedder tsek into that low ray-dee-you actiff pent to start marking all the things and buy a Geiger counter. They use that in the me-lee-tary. Is safe.*¹⁶

Ek-wah Dad! But I'll be sure to make your concerns known.

Haunani-Kay Trask was right when she wrote of colonialism and sovereignty in Hawaii in 1993,

...I had misunderstood this written record, thinking it described my own people. But my history was nowhere present. For we had not written. We had chanted and sailed...and

prayed. And we told stories through the great blood lines of memory, genealogy.¹⁷

Written records, produced by professionals in the field of preservation now serves as evidence. *Latte* stones and *lusong* can appropriately be viewed as artifacts of our “not” facts. Historic significance has rested largely on the facts of archeologists as well as former and present professionals of historic preservation, not the values and beliefs of the people. For whom then, have these artifacts been preserved for?

Fortunately, the National Park Service has become cognizant of differing values in the Marshalls, Belau and the FSM. The NPS has increased emphasis on the recognition of traditional cultural attributes and the preservation of special sites other than those of archeological interest. Through much assistance of the Western Field Office, (now the Pacific Great Basin Support Office) of the National Park Service in San Francisco, emphasis has been made to design historic preservation programs to meet the needs of respective peoples of Micronesia. Guam’s program can benefit greatly from the results of the Micronesia Resources Study and the various programs that have since been implemented as they were designed.

One important feature and recurrent theme of the [training] project was their concern over what might be best characterized as cultural values. Micronesian historic preservation office staffs and the broader communities interested in preservation frequently emphasized the need for a greater focus on traditional culture, over more typical historic preservation interests in archeology and historic buildings.¹⁸

It is time for Guam to re-evaluate how its current program interprets historic significance and re-consider all the possible ways it is being conveyed to the community for which historic sites are being preserved. Guam should consider examining preservation models that have been designed to meet the cultural needs of islands similar to Guam, such as those in Micronesia. It is not too late for Guam to preserve traditional cultural values and beliefs associated with *latte* stones and *lusong* in order to protect and preserve them. One way to document traditional values and beliefs is through the experiences of the *manamko*. Doing so will enhance our understanding of how artifacts have managed to exist in Guam’s landscape, even predating the arrival of European

voyagers. If these artifacts have always existed in Guam’s landscape, prior to Guam’s first historic preservation plan, traditional Chamorro values and beliefs may be used to enhance our understanding of historic significance to further improve current practices and policies in protecting artifacts from thievery and destruction today.

Notes

- 1 According to Jose Rivera Flores (see note 8.), *Ti* is a negative marker in the language of Chamorro people, meaning “not.” See also Donald Topping, Pedro M. Ogo, and Bernadita B. Dungca. *Chamorro-English Dictionary. Pacific and Asian Linguistic Institute Language Texts: Micronesia.* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1975): 202. Hereafter CED. Many Chamorro speakers do not agree with the definitions listed in this dictionary.
- 2 The word *lusong*, was not a Chamorro word typically used by Jose Rivera Flores or Charo-Bobi (also known as Mrs. Rosario Toves, see note 5). They were both familiar with the word *metate*, a stone typically used for grinding food, but not *lusong*. *Lusong* is defined as the Chamorro word for mortar.
- 3 According to Jose Rivera Flores and Charo-Bobi, *latte* stones are stones that mark the location of human burials. Places filled with *latte* stones are also associated with *taotaomo’na*. Both Flores and Charo-Bobi often referred to *latte* stone sets located in various locations of Tumon, that have since been bulldozed by the U.S. Navy. *Taotaomo’na* can be classified further according to their physical size. In Scott Russell’s book, *Tiempon I Manmof’na: Ancient Chamorro Culture and History of the Northern Mariana Islands.* (Division of Historic Preservation, 1998), *Micronesian Archeological Survey Report* No 32: 17-36, *latte* stones are made of two parts. The trapezoidal pillar, called *haligi* and the hemispherical cap, called *tasa*. They are found on the islands of Guam, Rota, Tinian and Saipan. They served as foundations to support above ground thatched dwellings. The stones vary in size. The earliest known written descriptions of *latte* stones were made in 1742 by Commodore George Anson and his officers while on Tinian. The first sketch was that of the House of Taga by Percy Brett, a junior officer. In 1880, Olive y Garcia, the Spanish governor of Guam, suspected that the *latte* sites were inhabited before European discovery. He observed that Chamorros had a superstitious fear of touching and working the stones or the land they occupy, because the places were associated with human burials. The definition in *CED*: 122, is not an accurate description.
- 4 According to Jose Rivera Flores, *manamko* means the old people or elders. *Mañaina* (plural).
- 5 According to Jose Rivera Flores and Charo-Bobi, a *techa* is a prayer leader. The dictionary defines it as one who leads prayers. *CED*: 201. Not to be con-

fused with *suruhana*, a traditional herbalist or herb doctor. *Charo-Bobi* is occasionally requested for assistance in situations where an individual is afflicted with a serious illness or experiencing unexplained emotional disturbance.

- 6 *Taotaomo'na* are the spirits of the "People from Before."
- 7 As spoken by Charo-Bobi, preserved in vernacular colloquialism. English translation: Just because you buy land, it doesn't mean you own those [*latte* stones] things. You tell those people to leave them [the artifacts] alone because they are disturbing things that don't belong to them. Even doctors understand the belief of the *taotaomo'na*, that's why people come see me. When everything is finished, they [the sick or emotionally disturbed] will not talk about what they did because it's disrespectful.
- 8 Jose Rivera Flores, age 66, *familian Bonik*, has traveled extensively while serving 22 years in the U.S. Armed Forces. He retired from military service in 1974, and retired from government of Guam service in 1995, after serving 27 years. He is the father of the author.
- 9 As spoken by Jose Rivera Flores in vernacular colloquialism. English translation: Baby. When did these things become artifacts?
- 10 Post-colonial studies: A literary movement, emerging mostly from within English departments in the United States and elsewhere, that attempts to describe and understand the experience of colonized peoples before and after colonization, by an examination of texts: books, images, movies, advertising, and so on. It simply does not mean studies "after colonization."
<www.vmoir.org/panop/subject_P.htm>
- 11 The Organic Act of Guam, signed on August 1, 1950, is the federal law that granted Chamorros with a limited form of American citizenship. It allowed for the creation of a limited form of self-government, and transferred federal oversight from the Department of the Navy to the Department of the Interior. It also clarified Guam's political status as that of an unincorporated territory of the United States of America which means that the island belongs to, but is not a part of the United States. See Vicente M. Diaz. "...Paved with Good Intentions...Roads, Citizenship and a Century of American Colonialism in Guam," originally prepared for the "Legacies of 1898" seminar, Oberman Center for Advanced Studies, University of Iowa, June 1998 (working draft, February 8, 1999): 6.
- 12 In 1995, attention to Hawaii's changing landscapes and the significance of both the Native Hawaiian landscape heritage and other types of cultural landscapes in the state's history was recognized. "...recognition of Native Hawaiian heritage as the preeminent concern.... The conference came, in fact, at a significant point in the evolution of Native Hawaiian efforts to gain more direct and most people today would say legitimate control over their

own history and heritage." See William Chapman. "Introduction." In *Preserving Hawaii's Traditional Landscapes: Conference Proceedings at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu Hawaii* September 15-17, 1995, edited by William Chapman and Chris Kirk-Kuwaye, viii-xiv. *Hawaii: Historic Preservation Program*, Department of American Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior Historic Preservation Division, State of Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, Historic Hawaii Foundation, Hawaiian Historical Society, East West Center: viii.

- 13 Edward Said points out that while the French and British were expanding their colonies, ideas about the colonized were also being formed. In a host of scholarly and literary works, the colonized were described as inferior, irrational, depraved, and child-like. "Scientists, the scholar, the missionary, the trader, or soldier could be there [in the Orient] with little resistance on the Orient's part.... under the general heading 'Orient,' within the umbrella of 'Western Hegemony' during the end of the 18th century emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display at a museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropology, biology, linguistics, racial and historical theses about mankind and the universe for instances of economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national and religious character." See Edward Said. *Orientalism*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979): 8. According to Antoinette J. Lee, in "Diversifying the Cultural Resources Profession." *CRM*, 22: 8 (1999): 47-48, [t]he *New York Times* reported New York politicians were campaigning to secure votes for foreign born. She further states that this profound change inspires both fear and confidence. The most disturbing observation made by Lee was the disparity between cultural dominant cultures and indigenous groups in the area of historic preservation, such is the case in the Caribbean region. According to William Chapman, when historic preservation did come to the islands, it tended to be borne by Europeans and North Americans who generally imposed their own ideas of preservation upon an often alienated populace. Further, historic preservation was viewed "as an effort to appropriate an indigenous culture and as the imposition of a new kind of colonial power." Lee's article provides a useful bibliography.
- 14 David L. Ames. "Introduction." In *Preservation of What, and for Whom? A Critical Look at Historical Significance. Selected Papers of the Symposium at Goucher College, in Baltimore, Maryland, March 20-22, 1997*, edited by Michael Tomlan (Maryland: National Council for Preservation Education, the National Park Service and the Center for Graduate and Continuing Studies, Goucher College, 1998): 5-13.

- ¹⁵ National Park Service. "Micronesian Resources Study: Protecting Historic Properties and Cultural Traditions in the Freely Associated States of Micronesia." A report on cultural resource management needs in the Republic of Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau. (March 1994.): 4.
- ¹⁶ As spoken by Jose Rivera Flores preserved in vernacular colloquialism. English translation: Baby. When did these things become artifacts? These things should be treated like turtles and fanihi (fruit bats) [endangered species]. No body can own any of it. There should also be stiff penalties for those accepting any kind of artifact. Just call it accepting stolen property. Your office needs to come down hard! I'm telling you right now. It's just like poaching deer. If caught, you confiscate the truck, the guns and the carcass. You better check into that low radio active paint to start marking all the things [artifacts] and

- buy a Geiger counter. They use that in the military [to mark government property.] It's safe.
- ¹⁷ Haunani-Kay Trask. *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaii*. (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1993): 154. For another perspective, see Lin Poyer. "Defining History Across Cultures: Islander and Outside Contrasts." *ISLA: Journal of Micronesian Studies* 1 no. 1 (Rainy Season 1992): 73-98.
- ¹⁸ William Chapman and Delta Lightner. "Historic Preservation Training in Micronesia, An Assessment of Needs." *CRM* 19:3 (1996): 13-14.

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Guam's GIS Program

The Guam Historic Preservation Office (GHPO) is now utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology. In fiscal year 1998-1999 the GHPO applied for additional historic preservation funds from the National Park Service to develop a GIS program. The project involved the purchase of computer hardware, a plotter, GIS software, training, and the completion of specific tasks.

A primary reason for developing the GHPO's GIS capability was to update Guam's Historic Sites Inventory (GHSI) maps. The addition of hundreds of sites to the site inventory by an early 1990s building boom necessitated such action. The existing 1:4800 Orthophoto maps, which were over 20 years old, were also cumbersome for fieldwork. Newer site locations were hand drawn onto paper United States Geological Survey (USGS) maps and not the old Orthophotos. The USGS paper maps began fraying at the edges from use. There had to be a better way to preserve and graphically display site information. That way was through the use of GIS technology.

ArcView GIS products from Environmental Science and Research Institute (ESRI) based in Redlands, California were chosen. The University

of Guam's Water and Environmental Research Institute (WERI) was selected as the contractor to conduct the GIS training and development of the GIS historic sites coverage and application.

The development of the historic sites coverage was actually quite simple because the GHPO already had in place a Historic Sites Inventory database. This database with selected site information had either single point or boundary coordinate data for each site. The GHPO GIS uses the site single point coordinate data in the database to create the historic sites map coverage as points or selected symbols on digital maps.

It was in solving problems associated with using the base maps and the cadastral map data that WERI's expertise became invaluable. The GHPO decided to utilize both the USGS topographic maps and Government of Guam's 1992-94 Digital Orthophotos as base maps. Though useful, the USGS topographic maps were last revised in 1975. Therefore, the government of Guam's Digital Orthophotos, photographed from 1992-1994 were also used for their more current ground data. Due to the different base map coordinate systems, Universal Transverse Mercator Grid (UTM) and Government of Guam Grid (GG) respectively, software was purchased that would calculate existing UTM coordinate values into GG coordinate values. The GG coordinate values derived from the UTM data were then placed in separate fields in the GHSI database. The user's choice of which base map format to use determines which site coordinate data fields are chosen to create the coverage.